

REMARKS

Reconsideration is requested.

Claims 1, 20, and 24 are amended. Claims 41-59 are cancelled. Claims 1-40 are in the application for consideration.

The title has been amended to conform to the claimed invention. Entry of the same is requested.

Claims 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, and 13-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Gambino.

Claim 2-40 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over various combinations of Gambino, Dixit, Zhao, McCollum, Lowrey, Wu, and Husher references.

Amended claim 1 recites, in part, wherein after forming the conductive material plugs, the dielectric material layer lining the at least one sidewall of the second opening is formed to be coplanar with the outermost surface proximate the second opening, and the outermost surface of the insulative mass proximate the first and second openings being coplanar.

In Gambino, after forming the conductive material 324 (Fig. 8) in opening 332 where metal interconnect 315 is not separated by dielectric layer 322, the dielectric layer 322 lining the opening 330 is not formed to be coplanar with the outermost surface of the opening 332. Gambino's dielectric layer 322 appears to be coplanar only with an outer surface of opening 330 and not the outermost

surface of opening 332. Furthermore, Gambino's outer surface of opening 330 is not coplanar with the outer surface of opening 320 (Figs. 7 and 8).

Accordingly, Gambino discloses a structure that is different from the structure formed by the claimed method. The other references of record fail to cure Gambino's deficiencies.

In view of the above, claim 1 is patentably distinct and unobvious over the prior art references of record. Claim 1 is therefore believed to be allowable.

As claims 2-19 depend on allowable base claim 1, they too are believed to be allowable.

Amended claim 20 recites, in part, wherein after forming the conductive material plugs, the first and second openings have substantially equal widths from the periphery defined by at least a portion of one of the electrical nodes to the outermost surface of the insulative mass, the outermost surface proximate the first and second openings being coplanar.

In Gambino, after forming metal conductors 324 in openings 330 and 320, such openings do not have substantially equal widths from the periphery defined by electrical interconnects 315, 310 to the outermost surfaces of dielectric material 307. Further, the outer surfaces of dielectric material 307 proximate openings 330 and 320 is not coplanar. For argument purposes, even if Gambino's opening 332 is considered to be similar to the second opening (without dielectric layer separating the conductive material plug from the electrical node) of claim 20, then such opening of Gambino does not have a

substantially equal width from the periphery defined by the electrical interconnect 315 to the outermost surface of the dielectric material 307.

In view of the above, the combination of Gambino, McCollum, and Lowrey fails to teach or suggest all the elements of claim 20. Claim 20 is patentably distinct and unobvious over the prior art references of record. Claim 20 is therefore believed to be allowable.

As claims 21-23 depend on allowable base claim 20, they too are believed to be allowable.

Amended claim 24 is believed to be allowable at least for similar reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1 in addition to its own independently recited claim features.

As claims 25-40 depend on claim 24, they too are allowable.

This application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance, and action to that end is requested. If the Examiner's next anticipated action is to be anything other than a Notice of Allowance, the undersigned respectfully requests a telephone interview prior to issuance of any such subsequent action.

Respectfully submitted,

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